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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 DILI 000455

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [ASEC](#) [AU](#) [TT](#)
SUBJECT: THE VIEW FROM AILEU: REINADO'S POPULARITY ENDURES, F-FDTL
PRESENCE REGARDED WITH SUSPICION

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CLASSIFIED BY: Elizabeth S. Wharton, Political / Economic
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REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (c)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Emboffs on Wednesday, September 6 traveled to Aileu to look into developments there since dissident Major Alfredo Reinado escaped from prison in Dili last week. Aileu is the location where he established his initial base following his departure from his armed forces (FDTL) post in early May. In response to last week's jail break, the international Joint Task Force (JTF) has deployed Australian Defense Force (ADF) platoons to Aileu and Ermera districts, each of which includes three members of the FDTL. This is the first time since the beginning of the crisis that FDTL have been deployed to these areas, which are strongholds for the FDTL dissidents including Reinado and the group of 595 dismissed soldiers known as the "petitioners". According to one FDTL officer, they are using this deployment to attempt to repair their relationship with the population in these areas, including the police. In Aileu, it is apparent that sympathy for Reinado remains strong and that the presence of active duty FDTL is regarded with suspicion and fear, primarily because of the killings committed by FDTL members in Dili on April 28 and May 25. All parties in Aileu report that they have not heard from Reinado and have no solid information on his whereabouts. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Poloff and U.S. Defense Representative traveled to Aileu on September 6 to assess local reaction to Reinado's escape from prison and to the arrival of several FDTL soldiers embedded in an ADF platoon deployed in response to the prison break, and to gather more information on the nature of the ADF and FDTL mission there. Aileu was the site of Reinado's initial base following his departure from his FDTL position in Dili in early May.

13. (C/NF) In response to the August 30 escape of Reinado and 56 other prisoners from Becora Prison in Dili, the JTF deployed an ADF platoon to Aileu the same day. Emboffs in Aileu on September 6 observed several groups of patrolling ADF over a period of about four hours. An ADF officer explained that their mission is to "secure the area" to prevent its use as a staging or hideout base. He said they have no orders to attempt to recapture Reinado or any other of the escaped prisoners, but that an unspecified number of other ADF forces "are out looking for him."

14. (C/NF) The ADF platoon in Aileu is also charged with ensuring that Reinado and his group do not gain access to any of the weapons held by regular police or the Police Reserve Unit (URP).

To date, there has been no evidence of any attempt or planning on Reinado's part to do so. An ADF officer reported that all the weapons inventoried in Aileu as of August 1 as part of the National Police (PNTL) weapons inventory are still accounted for. In order to reduce the number of weapons available in the western districts, 51 long-barreled weapons, including Steyrs and HK-33s, have been removed from PNTL stocks in Aileu, Gleno and Liquica in the last few days and sent to the Dili armory. (Comment: It should be noted, however, that when the PNTL weapons inventory was carried out by the JTF in late July, attempts to gain a complete accounting of the weapons at the URP base in Aileu were repeatedly stymied. Over several trips to the base, the inventory team was obstructed from getting a complete inventory for a variety of reasons they regarded as specious. The URP commander is known to be close to Reinado and Emboffs observed in early May that the URP was apparently cooperating with Reinado in his securing of the region, particularly in establishing armed checkpoints at the major entry and exit points. See ref tel #. End comment.)

15. (S/NF) Per an agreement between JTF and the FDTL commander Taur Matan Ruak three members of the FDTL are embedded with the ADF platoon in Aileu and are conducting some joint patrols with them. Although the JTF initially asked that they be unarmed, Emboffs observed that one officer, Major Coli Ati, FDTL's J3 Operations Officer, was patrolling with a holstered pistol while

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the other two soldiers were unarmed. Coli Ati told Emboffs that the soldiers accompanying him were allowed to have their long-barreled rifles with them, but cannot take them out on patrol. He said that the decision to allow them to have these arms was based on considerations of self-defense since it was known that the two areas to which they are deployed might be hostile toward any FDTL presence. ADF officers on scene stated that Coli Ati was being allowed to carry his personal weapon out of deference to his high position within FDTL. (Note: According to a well-informed Australian source (please strictly protect), the original arrangement was that each of the two ADF platoons would have one embedded FDTL member who would be unarmed and serve as a "liaison/intelligence" officer. According to this source, FDTL Commander Matan Ruak later insisted that each platoon include three FDTL members, not just one, and that they be permitted to carry automatic weapons. The source says Brigadier General Mick Slater, the JTF Commander, eventually agreed to these requests in part because Matan Ruak was holding out the alternative possibility of conducting an independent FDTL operation to capture Reinado.)

16. (C) Coli Ati, who returned to Dili the same day leaving two FDTL soldiers in Aileu, said he was there in an initial effort to "rebuild trust" between the FDTL and the people at large as well as with the district-based PNTL. He said he had held meetings with the regular Aileu PNTL, the commander of the URP, the District Administrator, and other members of the community. He described these meetings as constructive and cordial. He said the population was receiving them well but that members of the petitioners group were not happy with their presence. He added that the Aileu reception of FDTL soldiers was far more positive than what he had been hearing from Ermera. His colleague in Ermera, Captain Alberto, who intended to carry out

similar outreach activities, had reported to him that the Gleno-based petitioners had approached him to tell him that FDTL was not welcome there until the petitioners' issues were fully resolved. The FDTL in Ermera were therefore reportedly maintaining a very low profile for the time being.

¶7. (SBU) From the conversations Emboffs had with locals, police, and internationals in Aileu it was very clear that Reinado continues to enjoy broad support and sympathy and that people believe he should not have been imprisoned in the first place. This sympathy for Reinado is closely linked to general sympathy for the petitioners who are regarded as having valid grievances that have to this date not been properly heard. The URP commander reiterated these same views and used wording very similar to Reinado's statement following his escape, opining that the justice system was focused only on punishing the "little people" while ignoring the culpability of powerful politicians and the FDTL who had "started it all."

¶8. (SBU) In addition to sympathy for Reinado and other FDTL dissidents, there is widespread suspicion and fear of the FDTL based on the town's experience of recent events. This suspicion was initially started with reports from the petitioners of FDTL activities in Dili on April 28, further increased when injured members of Reinado's group arrived in Aileu after clashing with FDTL on May 23, and solidified dramatically when a very popular member of the community was among the PNTL officers killed in the FDTL attack on unarmed police on May 25 in Dili. Aileu residents operating the town's only restaurant shared their view of the arrival of the three FDTL soldiers, stating that the local population is scared and believe the soldiers "want to come and shoot" the population. This was reiterated in conversations with the URP commander and several of the city police, who reported that the population was "traumatized" by the sight of FDTL uniforms, although the police themselves claimed it did not bother them.

¶9. (C) Despite the concerns expressed to us, Aileu as a whole

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appeared normal, with the same activity level in the streets and markets as observed on previous trips. However, we continue to hear reports from both Aileu and Ermera that the population is extremely unhappy with the presence of FDTL soldiers. Rumors of large-scale demonstrations in both districts reached Dili on Thursday. However, we have so far received no direct confirmation of this from contacts in either location, and police contacts reached today have stated that there have been no demonstrations so far. The potential for anti-FDTL demonstrations does exist, however, as youth in both districts have declared their desire to mobilize a response, but are currently lacking someone to organize one. The National Front for Justice and Peace (FNJP) is currently planning anti-government demonstrations in Dili but has not relayed any plans for demonstrations elsewhere. The FNJP is led by dissident Major Augusto Tara who has shared with us that he is very upset by the FDTL deployment to the western districts and says that he is in close contact with Reinado.

¶10. (S) Comment: The initial response to the presence of FDTL soldiers demonstrates the extent to which relations between the armed forces and much of the population in these districts has been damaged by recent events. Even if FDTL interlocutors are sincere in their assertions that their main purpose in going to Aileu and Ermera was to repair their relationship with the people, such efforts will face significant challenges. These challenges will be particularly difficult to overcome if the issue of the petitioners is not addressed first. If, as some reports suggest, the FDTL is seen to be conducting active operations in pursuit of Reinado, the gap between the population in these districts and the FDTL could become unbridgeable. Meanwhile, while there is currently no overt evidence in Aileu of any active mobilization in support of Reinado, his durable popularity means that Aileu would likely be a receptive place for him or his supporters to operate. For example, Aileu could be a source of significant numbers of demonstrators should

Reinado put his full support behind the FNJP demonstration
planning. End comment.
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